State of Mysore, and Government have therefore decided to try a similar experiment in this country. The statistical information already collected in my office is being published in a compendious volume and arrangements have been made for the regular collection and publication of agricultural and other statistics.

CIVIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

29. **Municipal Councils.**—The year 1095 is marked by the passing of two important legislative measures, *viz.*, the Municipal Regulation and the Legislative Council Regulation, and I may be permitted to make the observation that, in spite of their defects, they cannot but be considered as landmarks in the history of civic and political legislation in this country. It is impossible to deny that the former of these enactments has enhanced the usefulness of municipal bodies, enlarged their powers and resources, and provided facilities for their constitution on a distinctly popular and representative basis. Government have not been slow to follow up this Regulation by taking steps to give practical effect to its liberal features. Soon after I assumed charge of my office, a conference of the Presidents of Municipal Councils was held under my presidency, and the conference was invited to lay down general lines of policy to be adopted in regard to the constitution and working of the Councils, and the manner in which they should amplify their resources and assume greater responsibilities. While the duty of the Councils to enhance their resources by resort more largely to local taxation and depend in a gradually diminishing measure on the doles of Government was emphasised, it was fully recognised that these popular institutions should be freed from official trammels in a constantly increasing measure. Government then announced their intention of generally accepting the decisions of the conference, and I think that I may fairly claim for the Government that they have kept their promise in the orders they have since issued regarding the constitution of the several Councils. It will be noticed that they have been systematically sanctioning the inclusion of the largest possible elective element in the constitution of the Councils, and have also been allowing almost every Council to elect its own President. In a few cases, they have not hesitated to go even beyond the recommendations of the Councils and to grant them constitutions more liberal than those proposed by themselves. It is needless to add that nothing will be more pleasing to the Government than the transference of the entire burden of Municipal administration to the new Councils, retaining only the power to conduct a strict audit or scrutiny into their affairs periodically, and it is hoped that the people living within municipal limits will realise to the full their responsibility to pay for services direct and indirect which they get through the labours of their civic fathers. From numerous protests and petitions with which they have been for some time flooded, Government gather with regret that the unwillingness of the people to share the financial burden has not diminished in proportion to the growth of their desire to share in the work of administration.

30. **Local Boards.**—It is under contemplation to widen the sphere of local self-government, by extending it to rural areas, and with this object the Additional Head Sirkar Vakil is engaged in drafting a Local Boards Bill. It is the intention of Government to create two sets of local bodies. One will be the Village Administrative Panchayat with specific sources of income and definite powers and responsibilities, such as the maintenance and control of local roads and ferries and the supervision of primary education and local sanitation. The other will be the District Council, representative in its constitution and mainly advisory in regard to its functions. It will be the recognised body for dealing with local needs and for advising District Officers in regard to agricultural, industrial, co-operative and other matters connected with the well-being of the locality served by it.

31. **Legislative Council.**—The Government have already indicated their intention of further liberalising the provisions of the Legislative Council Regulation, I of 1095, by making provision for a non-official majority, and by conferring the privileges of moving resolutions and asking supplementary questions. Government have also resolved to afford to the non-official members of the Council an opportunity to participate in the framing of the annual budget, and the latter have

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

already chosen six representatives from among themselves to sit with the officers of the Government in committee for discussing and settling the draft budget for the year 1097.

32. Popular Assembly.—It was my privilege to inform the Legislative Council on the first occasion that the question was raised after I took charge that it was the intention of the Government to revise the rules relating to the Assembly. This revision will, I assure you, be undertaken as early as practicable. It will thus be seen that it has ever been the earnest aim of His Highness the Maha Raja, whose accession to the *masnad* synchronised with the origin of popular government in this country, to train his subjects in the arts of civics and politics and to enable them to exert a continually growing influence over the administration of the State.

33. Social Progress.—It is a source of sincere gratification to me to note that the different classes and communities inhabiting this State are fully alive to the importance of remedying their social defects and effecting such improvements in their customary laws as are conducive to their social well-being. Government have always given practical proof of their readiness to help the people in their efforts at self-amelioration. In conformity with the avowed policy of the Government in this respect, leave has been granted for the introduction of a private Bill in the Legislative Council to effect further improvements in the law regulating marriage and inheritance among Nayars, while another Bill calculated to remove similar disabilities among Ezhavas, introduced in the Council as a governmental measure, has been referred to a Select Committee. Government have also appointed a Committee to examine the customary law relating to marriage and inheritance among Nanjanad Vellalas, and suggest the necessary improvements in the form of a draft Bill.

34. Other Measures.—The Additional Head Sirkar Vakil will soon introduce a Bill to amend the Jenmi and Kudiyan Regulation. With the object of giving the educated public a share in the administration of criminal justice, as has already been done in the case of civil justice, a Bill has recently been introduced in the Council to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, for taking power to establish benches of Magistrates for the summary trial of minor offences. It is hoped that these benches will afford substantial relief to the stipendiary Magistrates and enable the Government to reduce their number. In the same spirit, the pecuniary and territorial jurisdiction of some of the civil benches, commonly known as the Village Panchayat Courts, has been recently enhanced, and Government hope to establish more civil benches as time goes on.

35. The Depressed Classes.—While speaking at such length on the duties of Government and the privileges of the people, it is only fitting that I should strike a note of advice in regard to the responsibilities of the more fortunate classes of the people of the State towards their less favoured brethren known by the common name of 'the Depressed Classes.' The gradual amelioration of the lot of these classes has been a prominent plank on the platform of all progressive Governments, and Travancore has never been an exception to this rule. To the several invaluable concessions, educational and otherwise, that have been made by Government in the past in favour of these unfortunate communities, it has been my privilege to add a few more, in regard to the assignment of land, the construction of roads, and the sinking of fresh-water wells, while you will note that it is mainly in view to the protection of these communities that the Land Assignment Bill has been brought forward in the Legislative Council. It behoves every one in the State, high and low, to remember that these backward communities form a great national asset, as on them depends to a very large extent the production of food-grains and other articles that constitute the wealth of the country, and it is my most solemn appeal to all to omit no means in their power to improve the lot of these communities. May I, in the same strain of friendly frankness, advise all those who labour under civic disabilities and differences, not to be swayed by hatred or passion towards those who do not suffer from similar disabilities, but to view the situation in a spirit of calmness and confidence, remembering that many of the social differences that we see around us have

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly